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Dear colleague,

It has been 15 years last December that Indonesia brutally invaded East Timor. The answer of Jakarta to the UN-Security Council´s call for the withdrawal of its forces was the territory´s official annexation. The UN, it is true, rejected the act and went on considering East Timor as a non-self-governing territory and Portugal as its Administering Power. But meanwhile more than 200,000 Timorese, roughly one third of the original population, lost their lives due to the violence and famine that accompanied the occupation.

Indonesia is not interested in discussing the question in regard to its legal aspects and aims the annexation to be seen as a fait accompli, diverting the world´s attention to the development it purports to be bringing to the territory. It benefits, in its efforts, from the indifference of many countries and even from the connivance of some, moved by economic or strategic reasons. But nor the state interests, nor the false promises of a better life, can make one forget the crimes that were and are still being committed. Among them, the fact that the Indonesian occupation hinders the people of East Timor from exercising their inalienable right to self-determination.

Last March, after more than twenty years of struggle, Namibia achieved political independence. The people of Western Sahara, another victim of a long unlawful occupation, it seems will be able soon to pronounce on their own future through a referendum. East Timor will become, as to surface, as to number of inhabitants, the biggest of the territories with which the UN Decolonization Committee is still concerned.

The solution of the Namibian problem and the positive development of the question of Western Sahara (to which one can add the approaching end of apartheid in South Africa, the recent independence declarations of Palestine and the Baltic States, and

even the current interest of the Movement of the Non-Aligned Countries in more effective powers for the International Court of Justice) indicate that, among the community of nations the rule of Law begins, at long last, to gain ground on mere political expediency. The same can be said of the firm UN reaction to the present occupation of Kuweit by Irak (which tried, like Indonesia did in the case of East Timor, to mask Kuweit´s annexation under the cloak of false historical bonds and the establishment of a puppet government).

The moment is, thus, favourable to the cause of East Timor´s self-determination. It is necessary, nevertheless, to cast more light upon the juridical aspects of the question. The celebration, last November, between Indonesia and Australia, of the treaty on the exploration of the resources of the so-called Timor Gap, makes that need even more urgent.

That is one of the reasons that led to the present proposal: the formation of an international platform of jurists which, within its specific field, can contribute to the ending of the foreign occupation of East Timor and to the creation of the conditions that allow its people the exercise of the right to self-determination. The idea is based on the successful example of the "Parliamentarians for East-Timor", the international solidarity organization launched by Lord Avebury (Chairman of the British Parliamentary Human Rights Group), Tony Lamb (Australian House of Representatives) and Satsuki Eda (Japanese Diet), which now includes hundreds of members of parliaments in many countries.

Beyond other initiatives that, in due time, can be taken, it is proposed that the Platform considers the following plan of activities:

1- to support the Portuguese government in the exercise of its rights and in the fulfilment of its duties as Administering Power of East-Timor (contributing, for example, to the study of the forms that the impugnation of the ´Timor Gap´ agreement can assume);
2- to press the ministries of foreign affairs of the countries which until now have supported Indonesia, or have avoided to pronounce on the problem, to take a position in accordance with International Law;
3- to assist the "Parliamentarians for East-Timor" in any way possible through the preparation of materials, or through contacts with juridical personnel, organizations and institutions;
4- to mandate its members for the presentation of petitions in the UN (Decolonization Committee and Human

Rights) or for the participation in other international fora;
5- to publish works, in different languages, that treat under a juridical perspective the East Timor question (in general or on any particular aspect: self-determination, genocide, consequences of the application of the jus cogens rules, etc.);
6- to make a systematized scrutiny of the existent juridical bibliography on East Timor, and to organize, as far as possible, a library on that theme;
7- to stimulate the study of the question in the Law Schools of different countries, through informative meetings or round-tables and the assistance to students who wish to write works or theses on the subject;
8- to establish a yearly international prize for the best of those works or theses.

In the case that a considerable part of the contacted jurists (please see also annexed list) shows interest in the formation of the Platform, a constitutive assembly will meet in Lisbon on a date to announce. The subscriber has already, for that purpose, established contacts with a view to obtain organizational and financial support, including travel and subsistence costs to the participants. Considering the goals in view, Lisbon will also probably be eligible as the local for the Platform's seat and secretariat.

Yours sincerely,

Pedro Pinto Leite

P.S. Please send your reaction to the address above. If you know of additional people, either universitarians or those in private legal practice of international law, who might wish to participate, please include their names.

List of those who have already manifested their interest to participate in the formation of a

INTERNATIONAL PLATFORM OF JURISTS FOR SUPPORT OF EAST TIMOR'S RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

Country	Town	Name	Function
Australia	Clayton, Vic.	Sasha Stepan	Monash University, Tutor
Brasil	Brasília, D.F.	Gilmar Mendes	University of Münster (FRG), Researcher
France	Paris	Claude Bontemps	Université Paris XI Professor
	Strasbourg	F. Lucas Pires	European Parliament Member
		Rui Gomes	Council of Europe Civil Servant
	Toulouse	Brahim Terki	Université Toulouse Chargé d'enseig.
Greece	Sifnos	Argyros Gogon	Notary
Holland	Groningen	Arjen Tillema	Rijksuniversiteit Groningen
	Leiden	Milly de Bruyn	Leiden Journal of International Law, Chairwoman
		F. Von der Dunk	Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, Lecturer
		Joost Kooijmans	Rijksuniversiteit Leiden
		Pedro Pinto Leite	Attorney, Internation. Lawyer
Macau	Macau	Paula Escarameia	Univ. Ásia Oriental Lecturer

Country	Town	Name	Function
Portugal	Coimbra	Rui Moura Ramos	Universidade de Coimbra, Lecturer
	Lisbon	Adriano Moreira	Assembleia da República, Member
		Hugo Velosa	Attorney
		João Loff Barreto	Attorney
		João Soares	Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, alderman
		Jorge Miranda	Universidade de Lisboa, Professor
		José Guimarães	Assembleia da República, Member
		José Manuel Pureza	Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lecturer
		José Miranda Dias	Attorney
	Quarteira	Marian Does	Attorney
Switzerland	Geneve	Jackeline Louwe	Human Rights Centre Researcher
UK	Cambridge	Susan Marks	Cambridge Univ., Professor
USA	Boston	Nathaniel Berman	Northeastern Univ. Professor
	Cambridge	David Kennedy	Harvard University Professor
	S. Francisco	Michael v. Walt	Attorney